

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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R 092050Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8598
INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

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EO 11652 NA
TAGS PINS SHUM BR
SUBJECT: RESURGENCE OF NEO-NAZI ACTIVITY IN BRAZIL

REF: BRASILIA 4286

1. SUMMARY. RECENT OUTBREAKS OF NAZI-ATTRIBUTED DISRUPTIVE ACTIVITIES IN SOUTHERN BRAZIL, ESPECIALLY STATE OF RIO GRANDE DO SUL--INCLUDING DISPLAY OF NAZI FLAGS, DEFACEMENT OF BUILDINGS WITH SWASTIKAS AND SLOGANS, AND BREAKING OF WINDOWS--HAVE PROMPTED CONCERNED JEWISH COMMUNITY LEADERS TO PRESSURE PUBLIC OFFICIALS LOCALLY AND IN BRASILIA TO INSTITUTE POLICE INVESTIGATIONS AND PRECAUTIONARY MEASURE TO PROTECT JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS AND PROPERTY FROM FURTHER THREAT. EMBASSY DOES NOT CONSIDER INCIDENTS INDICATIVE OF NEO-NAZI REVIVAL, BUT REGARDS THEM AS PROBABLY REFLECTIVE OF RECENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS. END SUMMARY.

2. JUSTICE MINISTER ARMANDO FALCAO CONFIRMED TO PRESS JULY 26 THAT DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ORDER (DOPS--OR POLITICAL POLICE) HAS BEEN INVESTIGATING SERIES OF ALLEGEDLY NAZI-RELATED INCIDENTS WHICH HAVE PLAGUED STATE OF RIO GRANDE DO SUL (RGS) SINCE BEGINNING OF JULY. EXISTENCE OF MODEST (AND HARMLESS) PRO-NAZI
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ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING YEARLY COMMEMORATION OF HITLER'S BIRTHDAY, HAS LONG BEEN NOTED IN SOUTHERN BRAZIL. THIS YEAR'S REUNION AT ITATIAIA (OUTSIDE OF RIO DE JANEIRO), WHICH RESULTED IN IDENTIFICATION AND APPREHENSION OF ACCUSED WAR CRIMINAL GUSTAV FRANZ WAGNER, WAS PARTICULARLY WELL PUBLICIZED (REFTEL), AND MAY WELL HAVE PROVOKED LATENT PRO-NAZI SENTIMENT ELSEWHERE IN COUNTRY.

3. PRESS RECORDED APPARENTLY ISOLATED CASE OF DISRUPTION ATTRIBUTED TO NAZIS IN RGS CAPITAL PORTO ALEGRE ON JUNE 14, WHEN WALLS AT FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF RGS WERE DISCOVERED WITH PAINT-SMEARED MESSAGES DEMANDING AMNESTY AND LIBERTY FOR THE IMPRISONED WAGNER. HOWEVER, MOST RECENT AND WIDESPREAD OUTBREAK OF NAZI-LINKED MANIFESTATIONS HAS TAKEN PLACE SINCE EARLY JULY, WHEN RED-WHITE-BLACK NAZI FLAGS AND RED PAINTED PRO-NAZI SLOGANS INITIALLY APPEARED IN CITY OF SANTA ROSA, 540 KILOMETERS WEST OF PORTO ALEGRE. PUBLIC OFFICIALS AT FIRST REACTED SKEPTICALLY TO CHARGES THAT INCIDENTS WERE NAZI-INSPIRED, WITH MANIFESTATIONS ATTRIBUTED VARIOUSLY TO MENTALLY DISTURBED PERSONS, CHILDREN'S PRANKS, AND EVEN "COMMUNIST TACTICS". NEVERTHELESS, AND PARTLY IN RESPONSE TO REPORTED INTERVENTION OF WEST GERMAN CONSUL GENERAL IN PORTO ALEGRE, ARMY AND DOPS OFFICIALS IN SANTA ROSA AND NEARBY SANTO ANGELO UNDERTOOK INVESTIGATION OF INCIDENTS.

4. MANIFESTATIONS SPREAD TO PORTO ALEGRE DURING WEEK OF JULY 16, WHEN JEWISH COMMUNITY BUILDINGS AND EDITORIAL OFFICE OF JEWISH-OWNED NEWSPAPER ZERO HORA WERE DEFACED BY PAINTED SWASTIKAS AND HAD WINDOWS BROKEN. AFTER JULY 24 MEETING BETWEEN CONCERNED JEWISH FEDERATION PRESIDENT SAMUEL BURD, WHOSE ORGANIZATION REPRESENTS ESTIMATED 10-15,000 JEWISH RESIDENTS OF STATE, AND RGS GOVERNOR SINVAL GUZZELLI, LATTER ORDERED STATE PUBLIC SECURITY SECRETARY TO ESTABLISH SPECIAL SYSTEM OF POLICE PROTECTION FOR JEWISH

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POPULATION AND PROPERTY IN PORTO ALEGRE. RIO'S JORNAL DO BRASIL REPORTED JULY 27 THAT AS RESULT OF RGS AND JUSTICE MINISTRY EFFORTS, DOPS WAS INITIATING QUESTIONING OF PERSONS IDENTIFIED AS NAZI

SYMPATHIZERS. DOPS IN FACT WAS REPORTED TO HAVE UNCOVERED GROUP OF NEO-NAZIS IN TOWNS OF IJUI AND CARAZINHO, NEAR SANTA ROSA. POLICE AND MINISTRY OFFICIALS HAVE THUS FAR MADE NO PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON THEIR INVESTIGATIONS. WEEKLY MAGAZINE ISTO E (JULY 26) CLAIMED TO HAVE DISCOVERED JEWELER IN IJUI WHO MAKES AND MARKETS GOLD AND SILVER SWASTIKAS AND THAT NUMBER OF EX-NAZIS LIVE IN SOUTHERN BRAZILIAN STATES OF RGS AND SANTA CATARINA, WHICH HAVE LARGE PROPORTION OF ETHNIC GERMAN RESIDENTS.

5. LESS WELL PUBLICIZED WERE PRO-NAZI MANIFESTATIONS IN SAO PAULO AND RIO DE JANEIRO. IN SAO PAULO SWASTIKAS WERE REPORTED PAINTED DURING NIGHT OF JULY 31 ON SYNAGOGUE AND JEWISH SCHOOL IN SANTO ANDRE, NEARBY INDUSTRIAL CITY. LOCAL POLICE WERE REPORTEDLY INVESTIGATING INCIDENT AT BEHEST OF SAO PAULO JEWISH COMMUNITY. RIO JEWISH FEDERATION PRESIDENT ELIEZAR BURLA CONFIRMED AUGUST 7 TO RIO CONGEN PRESS REPORTS ABOUT EVENTS IN RGS AND SAO PAULO AND ADDED THAT THERE HAD ALSO BEEN SOME RECENT SWASTIKA PAINTING ON WALLS IN RIO. BURLA ATTRIBUTED OUTBREAK OF PRO-NAZI ACTIVITIES TO "TROUBLEMAKERS" WHO WERE TRYING TO STIR UP THINGS PRIOR TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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UPCOMING GOB ELECTIONS. HE ALSO IMPLIED THAT INCIDENTS MAY HAVE BEEN INSPIRED BY RECENT RELAXATION OF BRAZILIAN MEDIA CENSORSHIP, WHICH HAS PERMITTED WIDESPREAD COVERAGE OF ITATIAIA MEETING, WAGNER ARREST AND DETENTION, AND NEO-NAZI ACTIVITIES IN OTHER COUNTRIES. RIO CONGEN BELIEVES THAT JEWISH LEADERS ARE TAKING NAZI-ATTRIBUTED MANIFESTATIONS QUITE SERIOUSLY.

6. NONE OF ABOVE MANIFESTATIONS SEEMS TO INDICATE MORE THAN CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE OF NAZI "REVIVAL" IN SOUTHERN BRAZIL. EMBASSY HAS ALWAYS CONSIDERED NUMBER OF POTENTIALLY ACTIVE NEO-NAZIS IN BRAZIL TO BE MINISCULE. (ITATIAIA MEETING, FOR EXAMPLE, ATTRACTED FEWER THAN 30 PERSONS.) NEVERTHELESS, PRESS HAS REFLECTED CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION ON POSSIBLE RESURGENCE OF NEO-NAZISM IN BRAZIL AS A RESULT OF THESE INCIDENTS. JORNAL DO BRASIL RECALLED (JULY 29) SIMILAR UPSURGES OF PRO-NAZI ACTIVITY IN RIO GRANDE DO SUL AT TIME OF ISRAELI KIDNAPPING OF ADOLF EICHMANN FROM ARGENTINA AND AGAIN IN 1975-76, WHEN SERIES OF NAZI-ATTRIBUTED BOMB ATTACKS OCCURRED AT OFFICES OF BRAZILIAN PRESS AND BAR ASSOCIATIONS AND AT SEVERAL JEWISH INSTITUTIONS. PUBLIC OFFICIALS HERE APPAR TO CONSIDER MOST RECENT RASH OF INCIDENTS SERIOUS ENOUGH TO BE TAKING PRECAUTIONS AGAINST THEIR BECOMING MORE WIDESPREAD. WHILE ADMITTING THAT NEO-NAZI SYMPATHIES DO EXIST AMONG MEMBERS OF ETHNIC GERMAN COMMUNITIES OF SOUTHERN BRAZIL, FOLHA DE SAO PAULO (JULY 24) LINED RECENT MANIFESTATIONS TO GOB'S PROMISE OF A DEMOCRATIC OPENING. RACIST AND POTENTIALLY TERRORIST NAZIS, ARGUED FOLHA, DO NOT WANT ANY SORT OF OPENING AND COULD NOT TOLERATE A DEMOCRATIC BRAZIL, AND THEREFORE THE REGIME'S FULFILLMENT OF ITS PROMISE WOULD BE MOST EFFECTIVE PREVENTIVE FOR SUCH EXTREMIST ACTS.

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